



WASHINGTON COUNTY
FREE LIBRARY

Where People & Possibilities Meet

February 4, 2025

Delegate Ben Barnes, Chair
Appropriations Committee
120 Taylor House Office Building

Dear Chairman Delegate Ben Barnes, Vice Chair Delegate Mark S. Chang and Committee Members,

The Washington County Free Library strongly supports **HB-597 – Public Libraries – State Library Resource Center - Funding** which would continue the periodic increases to the State Library Resource Center (SLRC) per capita funding formula beyond FY 2025, and provide funding into FY31 and beyond.

The Enoch Pratt Free Library's Central Library was designated to be the State Library Resource Center in 1971 in an effort to provide and expand access to specialized library materials and services that are necessary for coordinated, efficient, and economical library services in Maryland. Unlike most states, Maryland does not have a State Library making access to SLRC services critical to Maryland libraries and citizens across the state.

The importance of SLRC cannot be overstated: in FY 2024, SLRC provided access to educational databases to public schools and libraries 8.9 million times; these databases vary in topic, but include genealogy, language learning and legal forms specific to Maryland. In fact, just a portion of these databases would cost libraries in Maryland \$4.6 million if each library purchased them separately. The State Library Resource Center is able to provide them to all citizens of the State for \$618,000.

SLRC also provides many other critical services, including housing the State's "last copy" collection. These materials allow Marylanders access to rare and historic texts relevant to Maryland history. SLRC coordinates library services around the state that are filling a critical demand for services by job seekers, small business owners, early literacy, after-school safe places, and free internet and computer access.

Library services are vital to successful schools, strong communities and adult education and we encourage passage of this important legislation to assure their continuation. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jenny L. Bakos
Executive Director
Washington County Free Library